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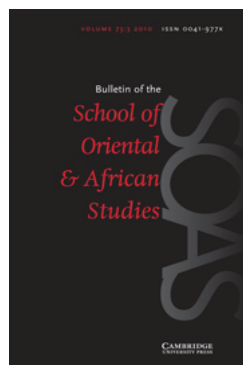
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**Jonathan A. C. Brown: *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World.* (Foundations of Islam.) xii, 308 pp. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009. £19.99. ISBN 978 1 85168 663 6.**

Andreas Görke

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rests on assumptions, but these have to be made explicit and have to be more persuasive than in this part of the study.

Even after discarding some material due to these methodological problems, the second part still provides a fascinating collection of data and information on pharmacists and how they were perceived by contemporaries. The author argues on this basis that texts in different genres saw pharmacists with distrust and that they consequently underlined the need to control and regulate the production and trade of drugs. However, this argument still leaves an important part of the material unaccounted for and one would have wished for a more thematic organization of this part instead of the rather schematic division according to source genres. As it stands, too much of the information is not analysed and in some sections the book reads like a list of sources pertinent for the study of pharmacists and pharmacology. The problem of a rather fragmented second part is compounded by the fact that part 1 and part 2 are effectively two independent studies that are hardly linked and that hardly speak to one another. The author has displayed great skill in collecting all the information and in putting these into a well-written and eloquent study and the four appendixes (on manuscripts of the *Minhāj al-dukkān*, the recipes collected in this work, its tests for verifying *material medica*, and its medico-pharmaceutical terminology) demonstrate the author's command of the material. However, this study deserved more time and more effort in constructing a coherent whole.

Konrad Hirschler

JONATHAN A. C. BROWN:

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(Foundations of Islam.) xii, 308 pp. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009. £19.99. ISBN 978 1 85168 663 6.

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*Hadīths* – the narrations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad – are vitally important in understanding Islamic religion and culture. While the Quran is the highest authority, the *ḥadīths* form the backbone of Islamic law and have had the greatest impact in forming Islamic culture.

While the significance of *ḥadīth* in almost every field of Islamic learning is readily acknowledged, this is not reflected in the scholarly literature. There are several good introductions to the Quran; there are also a couple of good introductions to the life of the Prophet Muhammad, but when it comes to the *ḥadīth*, introductory works are almost non-existent. *Hadīths* are usually either treated briefly in introductions to Islamic law, or discussed in specialized journal articles which are not intended for and are even barely comprehensible to non-specialists. Even some books claiming to be introductions to the *ḥadīth* require much prior knowledge.

The book under review here could help fill a gap. The author sees it as an “introduction to the *hadīth* tradition, its collection, its criticism, its functions in Islamic civilization and the controversies surrounding it to this day” (p. 5). Its organization reflects this overview approach: after a short introduction including an overview of the basic terminology, the next two chapters cover the emergence, transmission and collection of prophetic traditions and the development of *ḥadīth* criticism. The following chapters discuss the differences between and common features of Sunni and Shiite *ḥadīth* and the functions of prophetic traditions in different fields of Islamic

culture. After a chapter on Western debates on the authenticity of *ḥadīth* the book discusses early modern and contemporary Muslim debates on prophetic traditions.

Chapters 2 and 3 account for almost half of the book's volume. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the emergence and development of prophetic traditions and the related literature. It shows how prophetic traditions were transmitted, how forgeries came into being and how the different kinds of *ḥadīth* collections and related works developed. It draws attention to the limited regional distribution of *ḥadīths* in the earliest times and to the changing role of prophetic *ḥadīth* in the course of the first centuries of Islam.

Chapter 3 presents a likewise coherent and plausible account of the emergence and development of *ḥadīth* criticism. The author points to the different methods of evaluating *ḥadīths* through the ages, and to the difficulties of applying later terminology and methods to the times of the first *ḥadīth* collectors and critics. Drawing on his own research, he explains why Muslim *ḥadīth* critics were seemingly preoccupied with the study of the paths of transmission of the *ḥadīths* to the exclusion of their contents. A case study on the criticism of a certain *ḥadīth* shows in an exemplary manner how *ḥadīth* critics may try – and have tried – to judge a *ḥadīth* based on the study of the different narrations of the *ḥadīth* and the transmitters involved (pp. 113 ff.). The result, however, is telling: as the case involves a couple of transmitters of dubious reputation and others deemed trustworthy, the critics come to different results. Some deem the *ḥadīth* authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), others deem it good (*ḥasan*), and yet others established (*ma'rūf*). This is in fact a frequent phenomenon: Muslim *ḥadīth* critics had different views regarding the reliability of certain transmitters and paths of transmission, and in general they did not offer detailed explanations for their judgements.

Chapter 4 examines prophetic traditions in Shiite Islam, providing a solid overview of the Imami and Zaydi *ḥadīth* traditions, showing what distinguishes them from Sunni *ḥadīth* and explaining why *ḥadīth* literature and sciences developed differently from Sunni *ḥadīth*. While focusing on the Imami Shiite *ḥadīth* tradition is justified since this is the most important Shiite group, one wonders why the Zaydis receive attention in contrast to other groups such as the Ismailis.

The next three chapters deal with the functions of *ḥadīth* in different parts of Islamic culture. The first, dealing with the function of *ḥadīth* in Islamic law and legal theory, is the longest and most instructive, since *ḥadīth* plays a vital role in Islamic law, while its function in theology and Sufism is far less important. The author provides vivid examples of Muslim jurists' differing attitudes towards *ḥadīth*, explaining how they tried to deal with seemingly contradictory *ḥadīths* or conflicting views between Quran and *ḥadīths*.

The following chapter provides an overview of Western *ḥadīth* criticism and reactions from both Muslim and Western scholars. It summarizes important Western works on *ḥadīth* and identifies four main stages of Western criticism: the Orientalist approach, the philo-Islamic apology, the revisionist approach, and the Western re-evaluation. The compact and necessarily terse presentation of this chapter might be difficult to follow for non-specialists, and the author's illustration of the *isnād-cum-matn*-analysis of *ḥadīths* (pp. 228 ff.) is barely comprehensible even for those familiar with this technique.

Chapter 9 sketches attitudes towards *ḥadīth* in contemporary Muslim scholarship. The classification into four different approaches (Islamic modernism, modernist Salafism, traditionalist Salafism and late Sunni traditionalism) may seem arbitrary and unfamiliar, as the author readily admits (p. 243). Nevertheless, the chapter demonstrates the wide range of opinions and attitudes towards *ḥadīth* prevalent in the contemporary Muslim world.

Each chapter concludes with helpful suggestions for further reading (confined to works in English). There is also a useful glossary of technical

terms which at least partly explains the changing use of these terms over the course of time.

The book is well written and offers a coherent picture of the development of the field of *ḥadīth*, but puts much confidence in the reliability of the biographical traditions. The author tries to treat *ḥadīths* in a “neutral” or “objective” tone (p. 197), and to confine the question of authenticity to ch. 8 (pp. 15–6, 69). Despite this aim, authenticity remains an unspoken issue throughout the book. For instance, accounts of ‘Ālī’s or ‘Ā’isha’s critical statements on some *ḥadīths* (pp. 70 f.) are taken as evidence for the companions’ cautious attitude, although these statements may well be later ascriptions. The same is true for Abū ‘Iṣma’s conceding to having invented traditions (p. 73): how do we know if this tradition was indeed a confession of Abū ‘Iṣma and was not invented to discredit him? And how can we establish whether the story of Mālik acknowledging that a tradition was genuine but was unknown to him before (p. 27) is true or invented in support of this tradition? Other examples can easily be found. Although there is no reason to distrust all traditions, the problem that not only prophetic *ḥadīths* but also biographical traditions might have been invented is not touched upon. The emerging picture, however coherent and conclusive may seem, will probably not convince scholars with a more sceptical attitude.

One may also disagree with some of the author’s assessments. Thus, claiming that the later caliphs ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb rank “among the least prolific *ḥadīth* transmitters” (p. 20) seems odd, since both transmitted more than 500 *ḥadīths*, placing them among the top twelve *ḥadīth* transmitters (of more than a thousand companions who are said to have transmitted traditions from the Prophet). The clear distinction the author makes between direct transmission (“I heard the Prophet say”) and indirect transmission (“the Prophet said”) (p. 19) to account for discrepancies in the number of traditions a companion allegedly transmitted seems likewise problematic, as different versions of the same *ḥadīth* in different collections often differ with regard to the vocabulary used. The presentation of Western criticism of *ḥadīth* is not unbiased and does not do justice to scholars more sceptical than the author in regard to the authenticity of the Muslim tradition. The author points to achievements of the Muslim *ḥadīth* critics, their efforts in identifying forgers, their focus on finding corroboration, etc., which indeed counter the arguments of Juynboll and others that forgery went largely unnoticed. But the existence of, for instance, multivolume books identifying the names of those who obfuscated transmissions only proves that the problem was known. What it does not tell us is how effective the *ḥadīth* critics in fact were. How many forgeries went unnoticed, and how many reliable transmissions were wrongly deemed to be forgeries? We simply don’t know. But the differing assessments of Muslim *ḥadīth* critics, which we have seen above, suggest that a more cautious attitude would seem to be appropriate.

This critique notwithstanding, the book provides a clear introduction to the field of *ḥadīth* and its function in Islamic law and society and conveys a vivid picture of how Muslim scholars past and present dealt with *ḥadīths*.

Andreas Görke

DAVID JAMES:

*Early Islamic Spain: The History of Ibn al-Qūṭīya.*

(Culture and Civilization in the Middle East.) xvii, 174 pp. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2009. £70. ISBN 978 0 415 47552.

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